

SOME BIRDS FROM NORTH-WESTERN NEPAL

BY

COL. D. G. LOWNDES

(*With a sketch map*)

The birds included in the following list were collected for the British Museum by Major J. O. M. Roberts, M.C., 1/2nd K.E.O. Goorkha Rifles, during a mountaineering expedition to Central Nepal led by Major H. W. Tilman, D.S.O., M.C., in the summer of 1950. The species marked with an asterisk were observed by me but not collected.

But for the fact that the firearms available were far from satisfactory and that the bulk of the cartridges provided were unfortunately loaded with No. 6 shot, the collection would have been more extensive.

The localities Manangbhot, Jargeng Khola, Khangsar and Pisang (see sketch map) are in the dry zone of the upper valley of the Marsiyandi River which is effectively sheltered from the monsoon by the Annapurna Range which rises to a height of over 26,000 ft.

The Manangbhot area is separated from Langtang Khola where Mr. Polunin collected in 1949 (see *JBNHS*, 52 : 887) by about 100 miles. The terrain here is of a more arid 'Tibetan' character, and markedly different from the Rasua Garhi Dist. of Central Nepal. We are greatly indebted to Sir Norman Kinnear for the determination of the specimens. His notes appear in square brackets]. @ indicates that the bird was not recorded by Polunin.

LIST

@ **Corvus corax** : The Raven.*

Ravens were frequently seen in the valley of the Jargeng Khola, between 14,000 and 15,000 ft. during July and August.

Urocissa erythroryncha occipitalis : Redbilled Blue Magpie.

♂ 31-9-50 Khamihoke 3,000 ft.

In open forest.

Urocissa f. flavirostris : Yellowbilled Blue Magpie.

♂ 30-9-50 Khoplang 3,000 ft.

In open forest.

@ **Dendrocitta formosae himalayensis** : Himalayan Tree Pie.

♂ 29-9-50 Khoplang 3,000 ft.

In open forest.

Nucifraga caryocatactes hemispila : Himalayan Nutcracker.

♂♀ 6-7-50 Manangbhot 12,000 ft.

Frequent in pine forest.

@ *Pyrrhocorax pyrrhocorax himalayensis* : Redbilled Chough.

♂ 9-7-50 Manangbhot 12,000 ft.

Common up to 16,000 ft.

***Pyrrhocorax graculus* : Yellowbilled Chough.**

♂ 10-7-50 Manangbhot 12,000 ft.

Common up to 16,000 ft. Often in company with the former.

***Parus monticolus monticolus* : Greenbacked Tit.**

♀ 16-8-50 Chame 8,000 ft. ; ♂ 21-8-50 Thonje 6,500 ft.

One of the commonest tits in the wet zone from 6-12,000 ft. [12,000 ft. is the previously reported limit—N.B.K.]

***Parus rubidiventris* : Rufousbellied Tit.**

♂♂♀♀ 26-6-50 to 24-7-50 Manangbhot 12,000 ft.

From 8,000-13,000 ft. among conifers and birch. The 'highest' tit and common between 11 and 12,000 ft. [Interesting that this was the commonest tit between 11 and 12,000 ft.—N.B.K.]

***Parus ater aemodius* : Himalayan Cole Tit.**

♂ 17-8-50 Thangja 8,000 ft. Among conifers with other tits and warblers ; ♂ 24-8-50 Bimta Kothi 12,000 ft. In pine trees near the glacier. [The specimens are probably the most westerly that have been obtained.—N.B.K.]

***Parus d. dichrous* : Brown Crested Tit.**

♂ 6-9-50 Bimta Kothi 10,000 ft. In dense forest.

@ *Trochalopteron erythrocephalum* : Redheaded Laughing Thrush.

♂ 18-8-50 Thangja 8,000 ft.

In dense mixed forest.

***Trochalopteron a. affine* : Blackfaced Laughing Thrush.**

♀ 13-8-50 Chame 9,000 ft.

In pine and birch thickets. Also seen at 12,000 ft. at Bimta Kothi.

***Trochalopteron lineatum setifer* : Streaked Laughing Thrush.**

♂ 18-9-50 Thonje 6,500 ft. In mixed forest and scrub.

[Ticehurst, Whistler and I consider that the bird figured by Gould in 'A Century of Birds from the Himalayas' is the western and NOT the Nepal bird. Hodgson named the Nepal bird *setifer* and we consider it should stand as *T. lineatum setifer*, *T. l. lineatum* being the bird from the Simla—Kumaon area. (see *JBNHS*, 52 :—April 1955)—N.B.K.]***Trochalopteron v. variegatum* : Variegated Laughing Thrush.**

♂♀ 6-7-50 Manangbhot 12,000 ft.

Among conifers and birches, from 9,000 to the tree line, 13,000 ft. The 'highest' and commonest laughing thrush.

[I do not think it has been recorded as high as 13,000 ft. before—N.B.K.]

@ Fulvetta v. vinipecta : Hodgson's Fulvetta.

♂ 15-8-50 Chame 8,000 ft.

Among pines and birches ; feeding in company with warblers.

Leioptila c. capistrata : Blackheaded Sibia.

♂ 18-8-50 Thangja 8,000 ft.

Common from 6,500 to 10,500 ft. in the wet zone.

Siva s. strigula : Stripethroated Siva.

♂ 17-8-50 Thangja 8,000 ft.

One or two seen in pines and mixed forest between 8,000 and 10,000 ft.

Ixulus f. flavicollis : Yellownaped Ixulus.

♂ 22-8-50 Thonje 6,500 ft.

Among bushes and willow trees.

Yuhina g. gularis : Stripethroated Yuhina.

♀ 18-8-50 Thangja 8,000 ft.

In company with Stripethroated Sivas.

Yuhina occipitalis : Slatyheaded Yuhina.

♂ 17-8-50 Chame 8,000 ft.

Noisy family parties in forest and scrub.

Certhia familiaris mandellii : Nepal Tree Creeper.

♀ 14-7-50 Manangbhot 13,000 ft.

A few seen among conifers between 11,000 and 13,500 ft.

Troglodytes troglodytes nipalensis : Nepal Wren.

♀ 29-8-50 Bimta Kothi 11,000 ft.

On open stony ground.

Hodgsonius ph. phoenicuroides : Hodgson's Shortwing.

♂♀ 2-7-50 Jargeng Khola 14,000 ft. ; ♂ 7-7-50 Manangbhot 13,000 ft.

♀♂♀ 24-7-50 and 3-8-50 Khangsar 13,500 ft.

In birch thickets and juniper etc. scrub from 10,000 to 14,500 ft.
Common. An isolated pair seen at 8,000 ft.**@ Rhodophila f. ferrea :** Darkgrey Bush Chat.

♂♂ 21-9-50 Thonje 6,500 ft.

In mixed forest and scrub.

Phoenicurus frontalis : Bluefronted Redstart.

♂ 6-7-50 Jargeng Khola 15,000 ft. ; ♂ 18-7-50, Manangbhot 12,500 ft.

Males fairly common in pines and birches and open ground. 11,500 to 15,000 ft. Few females seen.

Phoenicurus ochrurus rufiventris : Indian Black Redstart.

♂♂ 29-8-50 Bimta Kothi 12,000 ft. Open stony ground.

@ **Phoenicurus schisticeps** : Whitethroated Redstart.

♂♂♀♂♀ 28-6-50 to 29-7-50 Manangbhot 12,000 ft. ; ♀♂ 24-7-50 and 30-7-50 Khangsar 13,000 ft.

Common among conifers and in juniper scrub 10,000 to 13,000 ft.

Chaimorrhornis leucocephala : Whitecapped Redstart.

♀ 20-7-50 Manangbhot 12,500 ft. ; ♂ 29-7-50 Khangsar 14,000 ft.

Range 6-15,000 ft., but very scattered above 11,000 ft.

Rhyacornis f. fuliginosa : Plumbeous Redstart.

♂ 16-8-50 Chame 8,000 ft.

Up to 10,500 ft. in the wet zone only. More common than the former at the lower levels.

Ianthia cyanura rufilata : Redflanked Bush Robin.

♀ 11-7-50, Manangbhot 13,000 ft. ; ♀ 15-7-50 Manangbhot 12,500 ft. ; ♀ 18-7-50 Manangbhot 12,000 ft.

Fairly plentiful locally in the pine and birch forest between 10 and 13,000 ft., but very few males seen and none secured.

@ **Calliope p. pectoralis** : Himalayan Rubythroat.

♂♂ 2-7-50 and 6-7-50 Jargeng Khola 14 and 15,000 ft. ; ♀♂ 5-8-50 Khangsar 14 and 15,000 ft.

Fairly common in dwarf juniper and on open hill sides from 13-5,000 ft.

@ **Monticola solitaria pandoo** : Indian Blue Rock Thrush.

♀♂ 26-6-50 and 2-8-50 Manangbhot 12,000 ft.

Rare. The only pair seen, on rocky cliffs.

Myophonus caeruleus temminckii : Himalayan Whistling Thrush.

♀ 14-8-50 Chame 8,500 ft.

Also seen at 12,000 ft. in Manangbhot, but scarce above 8,500 ft.

@ **Accentor collaris nipalensis** : Alpine Accentor.

♀♂♂ 29-7-50 and 7-8-50 Khangsar 15,500 ft.

Among boulders on rocky slopes and screes from 15-16,000 ft.

Prunella s. strophciata : Rufousbreasted Accentor.

♂♂♀ 2-7-50, 5-7-50 and 30-7-50 Jargeng Khola 14,000 ft.

Very common in juniper scrub 13,000-15,000 ft.

Muscicapa s. strophciata : Orangeorgeted Flycatcher.

♂ 14-8-50 Chame 8,560 ft.

At the edge of the forest. Also seen at 12,000 ft. at Binta Kothi.

@ **Muscicapa sibirica fuliginosa** : Sooty Flycatcher.

♂ (imm.) 17-8-50 Thangja 8,000 ft.

Singly in clearings in the forest.

@ **Eumyias thalassina** : Verditer Flycatcher

♀ 22-8-50 Thonje 6,500 ft.

A few seen among willows and bushes.

@ *Culicapa c. ceylonensis* : Greyheaded Flycatcher.

♂ 20-9-50 Thonje 6,500 ft.
In mixed forest and scrub.

@ *Alseonax ruficaudus* : Rufoustailed Flycatcher.

♂ 19-7-50 Manangbhot 12,000 ft.
Only two seen among pines and birches.

@ *Cyornis magnirostris* :

♂ (imm.) 20-8-50, Thangja 8,500 ft.
In dense forest.

***Lanius schach nipalensis* :** Rufousbacked Shrike.

♂♀ 26-8-50 Manangbhot 12,000 ft.
Among bushes and in fields. 8-13,000 ft. Common from 11-12,000 ft.,
but not seen between 9,000 and 14,000 ft.

@ *Pericrocotus ethologus laetus* : Shortbilled Minivet.

♂♀ 4-7-50 Manangbhot 12,000 ft.; ♀ (imm.) 3-8-50 Khangsar
13,000 ft.
Among conifers 12-13,000 ft. In small parties; occasionally seen.

@ *Phylloscopus affinis* : 'Tickell's Willow-Warbler.

♀♂♂ 28-6-50, 1-7-50 and 6-8-50 Manangbhot 12,000 ft.; ♀ 8-8-50
Khangsar 13,000 ft.

Common among pines and in juniper scrub from 12-14,000 ft. The
'highest' warbler.

***Phylloscopus proregulus chloronotus* :** Pallas's Willow-Warbler.

♂ 28-6-50 Manangbhot 12,000 ft.
Among pine and birch. One only.

***Phylloscopus r. reguloides* :** Blyth's Crowned Willow-Warbler.

♂ 15-8-50 Chame 8,000 ft.; ♂ 20-8-50 Thangja 8,000 ft.; ♂ 12-9-50,
Thonje 6,500 ft.
In pine and birch thickets, etc.

@ *Phylloscopus t. trochiloides* : Greenish Willow-Warbler.

10-7-50 Manangbhot 12,000 ft.; ♂ 17-8-50 Chame 8,000 ft.
In coniferous and mixed forest, 10-13,000 ft. Overlaps the range of
P. affinis, but does not occur so high.

***Seicercus b. burkii* :** Blackbrowed Flycatcher-Warbler.

♂ 13-8-50 Chame 9,000 ft.; ♂ 23-8-50 Bimta Kothi 10,000 ft.
In thickets between 9,000 and 10,000 ft.

***Perissospiza affinis* :** Allied Grosbeak.

♂ 3-8-50 Manangbhot 12,500 ft.
In pines. One only.

Perissospiza c. carnipes : Whitewinged Grosbeak.

♂♂ 3-7-50 and 5-7-50 Jargeng Khola 14,000 ft. ; ♂♂ 2-7-50 and 4-7-50 Manangbhot 12,500 ft.

In pines and juniper trees 10-14,000 ft. ; common between 12,000 and 13,000 ft.

Pyrrhula erythrocephala : Redheaded Bullfinch.

♀♂♀♂♀ 2-7-50 to 8-8-50 Manangbhot 12-13,000 ft.

In mixed forest. Not common.

Carpodacus p. pulcherrimus : Beautiful Rosefinch.

♂♀♀ 1-7-50 to 5-7-50 Jargeng Khola 13-14,000 ft. ; ♂ 13-7-50, Manangbhot 12,000 ft. ; ♂♀ 24-7-50 and 28-7-50 Khangsar 13,000 ft.

13-15,000 ft. Occurs at higher levels than *C. erythrinus roseatus*, but seen together at 13,000 ft.

Carpodacus erythrinus roseatus : Common Rosefinch.

♂♀♂♂♀ 26-6-50 to 15-7-50 Manangbhot 12,000 ft. ; ♂ 24-7-50 Khangsar 13,000 ft.

9-14,000 ft. Fairly common upto 13,000 ft. among rocks and scrub. Sometimes in open coniferous forest.

@ Pyrrhospiza punicea : Redbreasted Rosefinch.

♂♂ 5-7-50 and 7-7-50 Jargeng Khola 14-14,500 ft.

Seen on five occasions only, among rocks and juniper scrub. Only one female seen.

@ Carduelis caniceps : Himalayan Goldfinch.

♂♀ 28-6-50 Manangbhot 12,000 ft. ; ♂ 29-7-50 Khangsar 13,000 ft.

In fields and scrub, 10-13,000 ft. Quite large flocks in June.

Hypacanthis s. spinoides : Himalayan Greenfinch.

♂♀♂ 28-6-50 to 15-7-50 Manangbhot 12,000 ft.

Common in flocks, 8-12,500 ft. in fields and forest. In mid-July 10-11,000 ft.

Fringillauda n. nemoricola : Hodgson's Mountain Finch.

♀ 29-7-50 Khangsar 15,500 ft. ; ♂ 4-7-50 Jareng Khola 14,000 ft.

In dwarf juniper 14-15,500 ft. and higher. In pairs and large flocks.

Passer montanus malaccensis : Tree Sparrow.

♀ 11-7-50 Manangbhot 12,000 ft.

Common in villages and fields upto 13,000 ft.

@ Emberiza cia stracheyi : Eastern Meadow Bunting.

♂♂♂♀♂ 24-6-50 to 30-7-50 Manangbhot 12-13,000 ft.

10,000-13,000 ft.

@ Motacilla cinerea melanope : Grey Wagtail.

♂ 12-8-50 Pisang 10,000 ft. ; ♂ 21-8-50 Thangja 7,000 ft. ; ♂♂ 31-8-50 Bimta Kothi 12,000 ft.

Open wet ground and under bushes. Not above 10,000 ft. in the dry zone, but up to 13,500 ft. in the wet zone. Feeding young at Pisang on 29-5-50.

@ **Motacilla alba alboides** : Hodgson's Pied Wagtail.

♂♂ 26-6-50 and 28-6-50 Manangbhot 12,000 ft.
Wet fields and stony stream beds. Not common.

@ **Motacilla alba personata** : Masked Wagtail.

♂♂ 15-7-50 Manangbhot 11,500 ft.
One only seen on open stony ground.

@ **Anthus hodgsoni** : Indian Tree Pipit.

♂ 2-7-50 Jargeng Khola 15,000 ft. ; ♀ 2-7-50 Manangbhot 12,500 ft. ;
♂ 30-7-50, o ? 6-8-50 Khangsar 13,000 ft. ; ♂ 20-8-50 Thangja 8,000 ft.
Seen on open rocky ground. In forest and also among dwarf juniper up to 14,500 ft. at the edge of forest.

Anthus roseatus : Hodgson's Pipit.

o ? 6-8-50 Khangsar 14,500 ft.
Locally fairly common on open slopes to 15,500 ft.

@ **Otocoris alpestris elwesi** : Elwes's Horned Lark.

♂ 5-8-50 Khangsar 15,000 ft.
One pair only seen with young on high open slopes.

Aethopyga n. nipalensis : Nepal Yellowbacked Sunbird.

♂♀ 12-9-50 to 21-9-50 Thonje 6,500 ft. ; ♂ 15-8-50 Chame 8,000 ft.
In forest and open scrub. Among pine trees.

@ **Pachyglossa melanoxantha** : Yellowbellied Flowerpecker.

♂ 18-8-50 Thonje 8,000 ft.
In clearings in dense forest. Seen nowhere else.

Picus s. squamatus : Scalybellied Green Woodpecker.

♀ 23-8-50 Bimta Kothi 9,500 ft. ; ♂ 10-9-50, Thonje 6,500 ft.
A single bird seen at the edge of mixed forest.

@ **Dryobates macei** : Fulvousbreasted Pied Woodpecker.

♀ 17-8-50 Thangja 8,000 ft.
In mixed forest.

Cuculus canorus : Cuckoo.*

Cuckoos were comparatively plentiful (and were breeding) between 12,000 and 13,500 ft. in Manangbhot from June to August.

Rhopodytes tristis : Greenbilled Malkoha.

♀ 30-9-50 Khamihoke 2,000 ft.
In open forest.

@ **Coracias b. benghalensis** : Indian Roller.

♂ 5-8-50 Manangbhot 12,000 ft. A single stray bird in open meadow. [Occurrence at 12,000 ft. is remarkable, as it is not usually found above 4,000 ft.—N.B.K.]

Upupa epops : Hoopoe.*

Hoopoes appeared in Manangbhot in small numbers during July and were in evidence until the second week of August.

@ **Strix nivicola** : Himalayan Wood Owl.

♀ 14-8-50 Chame 9,000 ft.

Pine forest. Almost the only owl seen in five months.

@ **Gyps himalayensis** : Griffon Vulture.*

A single pair of Griffon Vultures was frequently to be seen in the area round Braga village, 11,500 ft., during June and July.

@ **Gypaëtus barbatus** : Lämmergeier.*

Several pairs of Lämmergeiers were present in Manangbhot from May to September at altitudes from 11,000 to 14,000 ft.

Milvus govinda : Pariah Kite.*

A single pair of Kites was present in the area of Braga village during July.

Eagles were frequently to be seen soaring above the Marsiandi Valley in Manangbhot during June and July; possibly *Aquila chrysaetos*.

Smaller birds of prey were conspicuous by their absence, but on 27 July a Falcon took a young—very young—Snowcock from a family party that Major Roberts was stalking.

@ **Sphenocercus s. sphenurus** : Wedgetailed Green Pigeon.

♀ 18-8-50 Thangja 8,000 ft.

Fairly common in the tree-tops in mixed forest, and fighting.

@ **Columba livia** : Rock Pigeon.

♂ (imm.) 3-7-50 Manangbhot 12,000 ft.

Common 10-13,000 ft. on fields, cliffs and gorges. Small flocks, often in company with *leuconota*.

Columba l. leuconota : Snow Pigeon.

♀ 28-6-50 Manangbhot 12,000 ft.

Common 11-15,500 ft. on fields, and less often on high open slopes. In large flocks.

@ **Dendrotreron hodgsoni** : Speckled Wood Pigeon.

♀ 23-8-50 Bimta Kothi 10,000 ft.

Several seen in open mixed forest.

Streptopelia o. orientalis : Rufous Turtle Dove.

♀ 13-7-50 Manangbhot 12,000 ft. ; ♀ 30-7-50 Khangsar 13,000 ft.

In coniferous forest up to 13,000 ft.

@ *Ithaginis c. cruentus* : Blood Pheasant.

♂ 29-8-50 Bimta Kothi 12,000 ft.

In birch woods. Locally well known and named *Chilme*.**@ *Alectoris graeca chukar* : Chukor.**

♂♂ 26-6-50 and 3-7-50 Manangbhot 12,000 ft.

Quite plentiful on fields 10-13,000 ft. Young seen in June.

@ *Perdix h. hodgsoniae* : Tibetan Partridge.

♂ 5-7-50 Jargeng Khola 14,000 ft.; ♂ (imm.) 29-7-50 Khangsar 14,000 ft.

In juniper scrub. Very noisy in the mornings.

***Tetraogallus himalayensis* : Snowcock.**

Snowcock were common between 14,000 and 16,000 ft. in Manangbhot during July and August.

***Lophophorus impejanus* : Monal Pheasant.**

♀ 29-8-50 Bimta Kothi 13,000 ft.

Sparingly above the tree line. Does not occur in the dry zone.

[In Sikkim not recorded above 15,000 ft.—N.B.K.]

@ *Tringa ochropus* : Green Sandpiper.*

During July solitary Green Sandpipers were seen on several occasions on the river-shingles in the valley near Braga.

@ *Scolopax rusticola* : Woodcock.

Woodcock were observed 'roding' at Thonje, 6,500 ft. on 25 May.

@ *Mareca penelope* : Wigeon.*

A solitary cock Wigeon in full breeding plumage was seen on a small pond on 11 June. It was most unwilling to fly and had presumably been injured.

@ *Nyroca ferina* : Pochard.*

A small party of Pochards was seen on another pond on 10 June; the drakes in breeding plumage.

A few other duck and teal were observed (on passage ?) on several occasions early in June.

HEDGEHOGS OF THE DESERT OF RAJASTHAN

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PART 1. FOSSORIAL HABITS AND DISTRIBUTION

(With four text-figures)

INTRODUCTION

Although the fossorial habits of many insectivores (moles and shrews etc.) have been studied to some extent, those of hedgehogs have not been studied so far. In this country particularly even their distribution has not been satisfactorily studied. Among the earlier workers, Herrick (1892) and Wood (1910) have studied only certain aspects of the fossorial habits of moles. The former has described their digging habits to be 'swimming through the earth'. Wood (1910) remarked: 'the burrows of the moles are always excavated not by bringing dirt to the surface but by pushing it aside.' Later on Hisaw (1923) and recently Reed (1951) have described in detail the method of their digging and shoving of the soil.

Coming to the question of their distribution in this country, Jerdon (1867), Blanford (1888-91), Wroughton (1918), Prater (1948) and Ellerman and Morrison-Scott (1951) have recorded the presence of these animals on a very broad basis. The details are lacking and also these workers have not mentioned anything about the population density of these animals.

This study, therefore, has been attempted in order to collect further information. The distribution was studied last summer (1954) during our tour of the desert. The tour was undertaken under a UNESCO scheme to study the role of vertebrates in spreading and preserving the desert conditions. We are highly grateful to UNESCO for the financial help. Information on distribution was also collected through the officers of the Government of Rajasthan, and those of the Anti-Locust Department (Directorate of Plant Protection, Government of India). The fossorial and feeding habits were studied in Pilani under the patronage of the Birla Education Trust, for which we are thankful to its Secretary, Shri S. D. Pande. We also acknowledge the help given by the Government departments and various organisations and express our gratitude to them and also to those individuals who helped us in various ways from time to time. Our thanks are also due to Shri K. S. Pradhan of the Zoological Survey of India and to its Director for helping us with necessary literature.

TECHNIQUE

Owing to their nocturnal habit, hedgehogs are not easily collected during the day time. They are generally found in the evenings under